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ABSTRACT

Corporate management is a reorganization of local government promulgated in Great Britain by the Bains Report and reinforced by the 1974 reorganization act. It emphasizes that the departmental orientation of much of local government must give way to a broader, unifying, corporate perspective. The example of how corporate management has not worked in Avon is only the most notorious instance of controversy associated with the program. Although corporate management is working in some instances, a list of problems are associated with it. There has been goal displacement and vigorous political infighting between education officers and other chief officers; bureaucracy has proliferated and the promised democratization has not materialized; objectives and standards have not been identified; and educators have not identified with the plan because it was a change mandated from above. There are in this country advocates of plans to place the educational system within city government. It seems likely that any such plan would lead to a more complex bureaucracy that would in turn lead to such problems as less public participation, diminished departmental morale, increased alienation, and increased costs. (Author/IRT)

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CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

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CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

AND EDUCATION

Overview

In this paper we identify the concept of corporate management and consider problems for education associated with the establishment of corporate management structures in local government in Great Britain. This is followed by a brief attempt to identify implications for educational administration in the United States.

Purpose of Corporate Management

Corporate management can be identified as a reorganization of local government promulgated in the Bains Report[1] and reinforced by the 1974 reorganization act. A main theme of the Bains Report was that the departmental orientation of much of local government must give way to a broader, unifying, corporate perspective. Other important ideas were increased administrative efficiency and more democratic participation among both members of government and citizens. The efficiency was to come about by giving local authorities central control of their money, manpower, and land. The corporate organizational pattern was the blueprint that would provide a structure to accomplish the centralization. And, of course, the primary reason for all of these changes was to provide better services for citizens.

Elements of Corporate Management

The essential elements of a corporate management structure included:

1. The Chief Executive, who should have no department of his own inasmuch as he represents the corporate view. The Chief Executive leads the team of chief officers and acts as principal advisor to

the Council. He should have superior managerial ability.

2. A Policy and Resources committee to advise on objectives and priorities, coordinate and control implementation, monitor and review performance. This committee has three sub-committees to deal with Finance, Land and Buildings, and Personnel.
3. A Management Team led by the Chief Executive Officer made up of chief officers of all the major services. This team is the counterpart of the policy and resources committee. The management team should have a corporate identity of its own. Officers do not attend as representatives of their departments, although they can speak for their departments.
4. Program Area committees that meet overlapping needs and are linked to local objectives rather than particular services.

The classic corporate committee structure is shown in Figure 1[2]

The arrangement of officers and identification of the management team can be seen in Figure 2.[3] Note particularly the position of the Chief Personnel Officer shown attached directly to the Chief Executive. To anticipate a discussion of problems, note the description of the personnel officer's position in Bains: "He (the chief personnel director) should have direct access to the chief executive and not be subordinated to any other chief officer. Chief officers in other departments will be expected to accept and act on the advice of the personnel officer on matters within his specialized knowledge."[4] The structures advocated in Figures 1 and 2 were presented as a prototype. It was later alleged that many local authorities just copied the diagrams from Bains without even reading the text.[5]

Even with this brief description of corporate management experienced educational administrators can predict what would go wrong. And they are right.

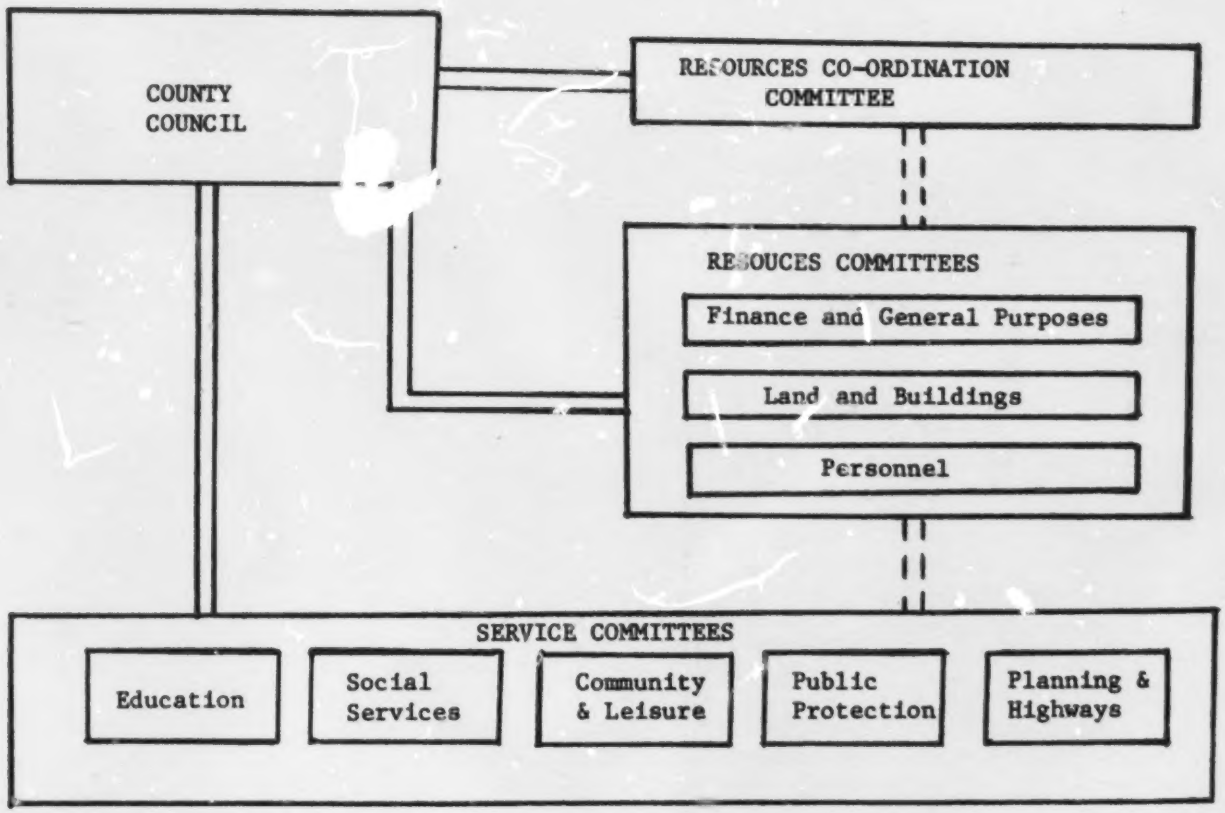

Figure 1. Corporate management committee structure

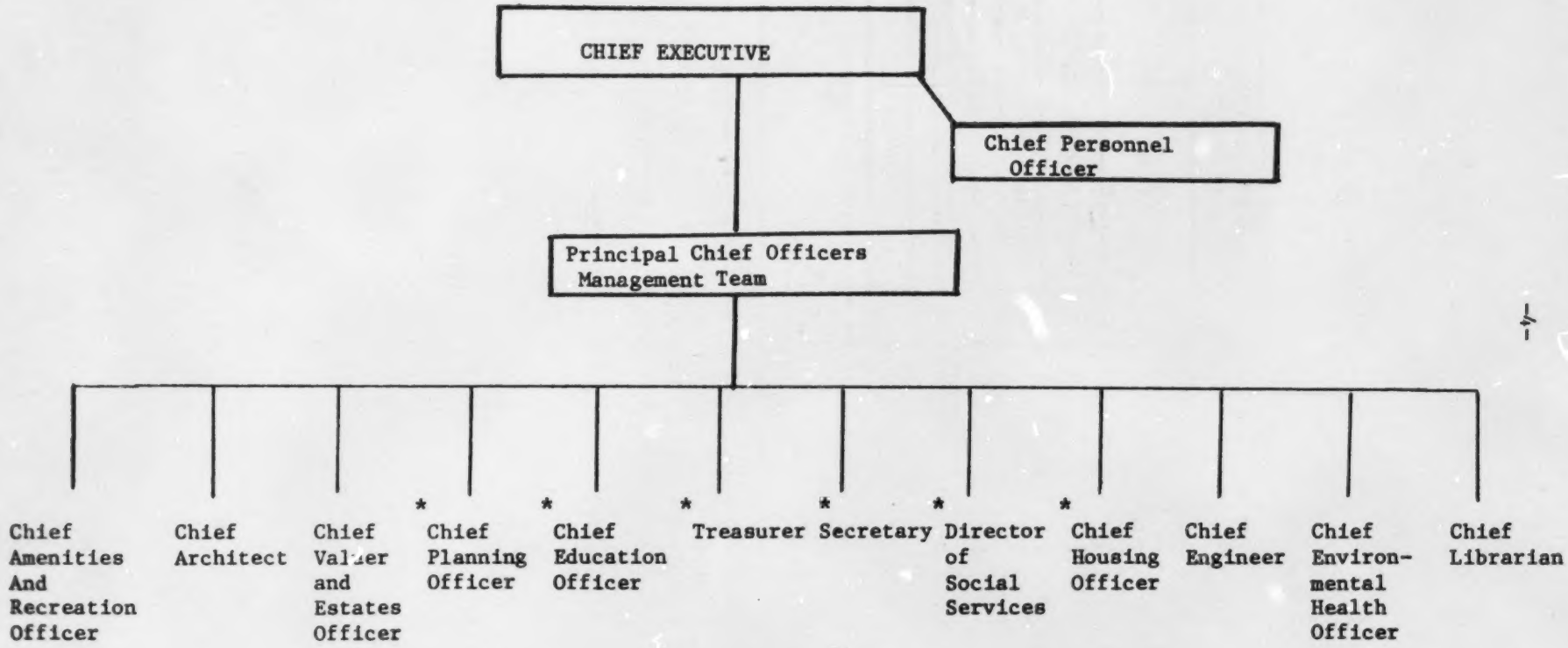

Figure 2. Chief officers according to Bains proposals

*Members of management team

Whatever could go wrong almost certainly has. Before cataloging the list of predictable blunders, we will consider events in one authority that has become a symbol of the problems associated with implementing corporate management -- Avon.

Problems of Corporate Management in the Avon Local Education Authority

Avon earned its dubious honor as a symbol of corporate mismanagement as a result of the resignation of Mr. Derrick Williams, chief education officer of the Avon Local Education Authority. This event, "...brought to a head one of more serious crises of corporate management since the Bains Report hit local government.[6] In his resignation statement Mr. Williams explained that he was not against corporate management per se just the Avon version, "I find too little corporate management and too many uncoordinated managers."[7]

According to Williams he could not exercise his responsibilities properly because "...the management of the education service is so fragmented between so many committees and administrative departments of the council that there is no united or effective direction of it."[8] All of the teachers unions of Avon supported Mr. Williams and expressed hostility toward the Avon county council's interpretation of corporate management. The society of education officers (SEO) published a notice advising members considering working for the Avon LEA to get in touch first with the London headquarters of the SEO.[9]

The president of the SEO after noting that members were gravely anxious and apprehensive about conditions in Avon, commented that, "if anyone contacts us about the advertisement (for a new chief education office for Avon) the most we can do is to make sure they know all about the background and know about Derrick Williams" Statement."[10] The chairman of the Avon County Council promised SEO to provide new job specifications for the vacancy of chief

education officer to amplify the "very wooly documents sent out to early applicants."[11] The Avon authority also promised to review its corporate management structure and the problems it raises for education officers. The SEO was assured that the new education chief would "...be given a free hand to reorganize his own department within the arrangements agreed at his appointment."[12]

The SEO asked for a meeting with the Department of Education and Science (DES) about the, "clash between the practices of corporate management and the laws as laid down by the 1944 Education Act."[13] This was denied for legal-procedural reasons:

> State's power to direct a local inquiry under Section 93 of the Education Act, 1944 can only be exercised in relation to a specific function laid down by the Act. No such specific function existed. The Secretary also said that any wider examination of the corporate management system was a job for the Department of Environment.[14]

Teachers and local government employees in Avon demanded an inquiry into the management of the Avon County Council.[15] A member of parliament (Mr. Terry Walker, Labor) unsuccessfully carried the demand for an inquiry to the Commons. (It should be noted that Conservatives control the Avon council.) According to Mr. Walker, M.P. "What is being complained about is a system where it seems every officer, department or committee in the hierarchy is able to issue instructions direct to schools and education staff on details and basic principles without any reference to the education officer or to the education committee itself." Consequently, reasons Mr. Walker, "There is nothing left for the chief education officer to do in Avon except to deploy teachers."[16] The catalog of corporate (mis)management horrors continues: "There have been instances of builders arriving at schools without warning in the middle of examinations; there have been instances of holes being dug in playgrounds or trees being chopped down before the school knows anything about it."[17]

Indictments of Corporate Management

The Avon debacle is only the most notorious instance of controversy associated with the implementation of corporate management. Much of the difficulty is due to a misunderstanding of the Bains Report, more to a lack of inservice help for those charged with making the changes. However, we must agree with Geoffrey Winter of Sheffield City Polytechnic that, "...it does not matter whether the management structure of the authority represents a misinterpretation of Bains or of anybody else. What matters is how things have actually worked out, what people are really doing, the visible effects on the Education service and what will happen if nothing is done to remedy the situation."[18]

General maladies reported by Winter include the complication of decision making processes with the involvement of more committees and officers. Functions have been taken away from Education Committees and an Education Committee may be ignored when educational matters are being considered. Power is concentrated in committees and officers not responsible for services. The Personnel Sub-Committee interferes in educational staffing matters and causes delays. Time, effort, and manpower are wasted because of bureaucratic requirements. Unproductive meetings devoted to trivia waste time. Finally, Winter reports, "corporate management teams are not contributing to the effectiveness of the education service nor are they enabling the education service to contribute to others, they are spending time on trivia"[19]

Winter also supplies specific instances to support his generalization. In these cases he asks that we imagine that we are the administrator involved. Four of these examples follow.[20]

1. A school meals employee applies for a day's leave of absence without pay. She wonders what is happening to her application. You inquire. You find that seven or eight officers in the Town/County Hall are involved in the decision.

2. You are appointing a school clerk. A representative of the Personnel Officer has to take part in the actual selection and you are not allowed to make the appointment without his presence at the interviews.

3. You have a problem relating to the non-teaching staff establishment of your institution. The Education Committee has no power to decide. A review is required. Two years have passed and you are still waiting for the review, without which there can be no decision.

4. A vacancy arises within an agreed staffing scale. You must apply for permission to fill it. A senior education officer is required to vet (check out) your application, a chairman is required to agree to it; it then goes to the Personnel Officer for consideration, then to the Management Team, then to the Management Group.

That problems such as those detailed by Winter and those besetting Derrick Williams in Avon are not isolated instances seems supported by the British press. In the Times Educational Supplement Rowan begins her assessment with these provocative inquiries:[21]

> Are your local bureaucrats too busy peopling the town halls with admin men to provide the services local government is there for?
>
> Do your education officers spend so much time on management problems and paper work that they have little left over to think about the curriculum or the Great Debate?
>
> Are the teacher unions threatening work-to-rule because the personnel department is interfering in the pupil-teacher ratios and the finance committee is making the decisions about in-service training, or vice versa? And do you know just how many hours and memos are wasted while empire-building departments fight for the right to control grass cutting in dual-use playing fields or care takers' conditions of service?
>
> Do the politicians believe that they are losing the power struggle because the seat of decision-making has switched from the smoke-filled rooms of the ruling group to the Chief Executive's pet corporate planning unit?
>
> If the answer to all these questions is yes, a fashionable diagnosis would be that you are suffering from a severe case of corporate management, with a side effect often characterized as the rape of education.

More recent reports reveal that the problems are not yet solved. In Oxfordshire County there was some concern that one million pounds saved by

the underspending of nearly all departments except education had gone to other services -- this despite a protested high staffing ration.[22] In Bradford the awarding of 30,000 "slack" pounds to the fuel efficiency unit caused the reporter to wonder: "Which committee will enthusiastically search for potential savings if the fruits of their labours go to boost the pet project of another department?"[23] An overall projection of money intended for education but spent by local authorities during 1976-77 is 100, million pounds! It is feared that the loss to education this year may be worse.[24]

We close this biased account of the introduction of corporate planning and corporate management with a question and a caution. The question is brought by Robert Spooner, Headmaster, Foxwood School, Leeds: "Whether the distinctive role of education in local government is to be preserved and strengthened or whether it will be further eroded by corporate management and Whitehall interference."[25] The caution from Brian Day, deputy chief education officer in Banbury that the evils of corporate management (especially time-wasting paper work) could be brought into the schools and foisted on headteachers by the proposals of the Taylor Report.[26]

Comment on Corporate Management

If we had stopped after an examination of Figures I and 2 we would probably have predicted all of the mistakes identified by critics of corporate management. Certainly, there has been goal displacement and naturally there has been vigorous political in-fighting between education officers and the other chief officers for diminishing resources. Bureaucracy has proliferated and the promised democratization did not materialize. If anything, it is much more difficult for citizens and education officers to find ways to participate. A cornerstone of the whole

structure -- objectives and standards -- has not been identified. Finally, when change is mandated from above, the participants do not identify with the change -- educators do not yet own corporate management.

Despite all this, and surprisingly for an American observer, there is not a real movement to abolish corporate management. The concept of corporate planning seems to be accepted and the bugs in corporate management will seemingly be attended to in due course.

Corporate management seems to be preferred by some of its most vigorous critics to the possibility of increased control by the central government. It is almost as though the success of corporate management is now vitally important to the continuance of educational administration in local government.[27] J.V. Miller, Chief Executive of Gloucestershire County Council put it this way: "Whatever the weakness of local government, it is the only organization which has a remote chance of standing up to Whitehall -- local democracy may be a frail defence against over-powering pressure from the centre but it does exist."[28]

At one time we could have attempted to analyze the implementation of corporate management according to the usual party positions. A Conservative government was responsible for the concept. However as one approaches the local level the national party positions are not so influential. Instead of national party politics the corporate management politics are self interest, territorial, jurisdictional politics. When a party is put out of power at the local level there is also an attempt to put out their management structure. This inelegant strategy is well known to Americans, it can be dubbed: "the I'm against whatever my opponent is for" principle of local politics.[29] The future planning required by corporate management blunts this affect even as it prevents the educational authority from responding to changing mandates from the voters.

In leaving this description of issues attending the establishment of corporate management we can appreciate Professor George Baron's conception that the best model to guide such study is more like a mobile than a map. According to Professor Baron, "The study of policy and administration is essentially a study of movement and change. Structure and framework and system is process frozen in a moment of time."[30]

Are there Implications for Developments in the United States?

We begin by making the essential disclaimer that the cross-cultural differences between nations make it impossible to transfer learnings directly from one country to another. However, with appropriate caution, we can always learn from one another.

There are developments in the United States that could be better understood by drawing upon the experiences of our British cousins in their introduction of corporate management. Some of these developments (team administration) are only interesting aberrations at this time, not necessarily portents of developments in educational administration and governance. Other developments (accountability) are full-blown trends.

Incorporation of Education into Municipal Government

We consider first a phenomenon that most closely approximates the basic physical change involved in corporate management -- the incorporation of the education service into local government. There is historic precedent for this arrangement if we consider that until 1827 schools were part of general government.[31]

The most visible proponent of local municipal control of education today is Mayor Edward I. Koch of New York. Mayor Koch campaigned for the abolition

of the board of education. According to Deputy Mayor Herman Badillo, "Who is in charge of education," the Mayor is now willing to permit the Board to continue but with changes to ensure his (Koch's) control. The Mayor now, "wants the maximum possible power over the board not only to appoint and dismiss its members and the Chancellor, but to change basic education policies because they do not lead to pupil achievement in the schools."[32] Mayor Koch is building on the ideas of his predecessor, Abraham Beame, who sought to make the Board of Education a line agency. Our own survey in 1969 found considerable support for mayors taking a more active role in education. At that time Mayor Ilus Davis of Kansas city told us: "The traditional concept of a separate government for the city and the school district ignores the mutuality of interest of the two agencies and creates a gap which must be closed."[33]

The British experience suggests that the return of education to local government will not be easily accomplished. Educators, board members and their organizations will lead the opposition. The specter of a return to the spoils system will be powerful rhetoric from our own heritage.

If accomplished, the new structure may be poorly understood and inefficiently implemented.

Power is being taken from someone (boards and educators) and given to or shared with someone else (bureaucrats, officers of the local government and politicians). Because of our local tradition and the Tenth Amendment, the transfer cannot be mandated by a central government. The voluntary transfers of power in hundreds of cities throught the country seems unlikely. Here we find an excellent example of the problems with trans-Atlantic borrowing. The structure of our institutions, our laws and traditions all make the incorporation of education into general local government a very different task than it was in Britain.

Affiliation of Schooling with Other Educational Agencies

For several years there have been efforts to bring public schools together with other educational and youth serving agencies. School parks and the community school movement are examples.[34] More recently, Mario Fantini proposed that: "We need a structure capable of coping with the future. Thinking about an educational rather than school system will necessitate not only a redefinition in function and delivery, but a realignment of the basic parties at interest: the recipients of educational services -- parents and students, other taxpayers -- and the deliverers of these services -- professional educators, other community units including business and industry, labor, government, and the cultural and scientific agencies."[35]

The British experience does not bear directly on attempts to coordinate all education services without absorbing them into a larger governmental structure. However, the British experience with the governmental, bureaucratic allocation of new relationships does indicate potential problems. Related youth services previously part of education were sorted out to other agencies by some corporate authorities.[36] The coordination has obviously deteriorated in these places. This possibility does not relieve American administrators from the need to find more effective ways of voluntarily joining efforts and sharing resources with related agencies. It does suggest that resort to a solution by government edict should not be the first strategy attempted.

Accountability

As we noted before, accountability -- whatever that is -- is a full blown trend in education. Ralph Tyler ties the emphasis on accountability to three powerful forces: increasing taxes, a recognition that many students fail to meet standards of literacy and the development of management procedures by

industry and defense.[37] However the concept is interpreted, there is ample evidence of a growing demand that educators and the educational system become more "accountable."

The simple lesson we can draw from the progress of corporate management is that it is one thing to advocate the abstract concept of accountability, quite another to operationalize it. Gordon Moore of Bradford advises that it is time to attend to standards and the proper use of equipment. He is impatient at the lack of progress in this area: "No, we can't wait for national guidance on standards. There's nothing in this world which cannot be reviewed."[38]

The movement toward a version of educational accountability will be especially difficult in Britain because of the wide-spread opposition to any interference by central government in curriculum. Although legally (to the states) and traditionally (to local districts) there are possibly more important obstacles to a nation-wide accountability in this country, it seems we may have an easier time of it. There is almost unspoken consensus in the United States that some standards in the three R's should be expected. The same consensus appears to exist in Britain but there seems to be a fear that to admit this could be an excuse for Whitehall to make unwarranted demands on local authorities. This same matter of principle has not yet become an issue in the United States, possibly because the pressure has not come from the federal government.

Team Administration

If "accountability" seems an ambiguous concept, it is a model of precision when compared to the meanings of the "administrative team." It can and does mean everything from the superintendent and his deputies to the entire

professional staff of a district. Commonly, it refers to the superintendent's cabinet of assistant superintendents and directors of major departments of the central administration. An interesting approach to the administrative team is made by writer John Merrow, former superintendent Richard Foster, and incumbent superintendent Nolan Estes. They think: ". . . the notion of the superintendent as a single person should and will disappear. Someday in the future, New York City, or Pittsburgh, or San Francisco will hire a superintending team of six or ten or so."[39]

Clearly, the administrative teams -- however defined -- in this country do not pretend to deal with the interdepartmental construct of the corporate management team. So, once again it is perilous to draw inferences from corporate management. The teams of the Bains Report have no equivalent in any of the developments identified in the United States.

It is clear that the independent existence and functioning of the management team has not occured as hoped for by Bains. It is also possible to predict that the management team in this country will be subject to the same dangers of wasting time on meetings and confused lines of authority that have beset the corporate teams. On the positive side, education officers in Britain have appreciated the improved opportunities for communication in the teams. Perhaps we can find a way to secure the communication without the trivia.

Concluding Comments

This discussion of corporate management and education has not been a balanced treatment of strengths and weaknesses. We have dealt more with problems than with improvements. This is to be expected both because of the recency of the reorganization and the greater saliency of negative reports.

It should be noted that corporate management is working quite well in some authorities. It is also clear that many of the negative concomitants of corporate management would occur with any other system of governance as well. It does appear that corporate management will be improved and will survive the spate of problems that now beset it.

The political machinations associated with corporate management, the struggle between Labor and Conservative, between DES and LEA, between professional educators and citizens, and among specialists are using and being used by corporate management. That complex struggle defies one-dimensional analysis. As Professor Baron told us, it is a mobile more than a map!

There is another way of viewing corporate management that will yield more trans-Atlantic insights than the political analysis. When approached as s study of organizational behavior, corporate management permits the testing of universal hypotheses about the effects of increased bureaucracy.

If we return to the two diagrams (committees and officers) taken from Bains in our Figures 1 and 2, we have a basis for predicting subsequent events. The more complex bureaucracy of corporate management should lead to less public participation, diminished departmental morale, increased alienation, increased rigidity throughout the system, decreased performance of the system, increased problems, increased costs, decreased creativity and innovation and so on. This analysis will be possible if the political mobile doesn't whirl corporate management into the dust bin -- which seems unlikely.

We do not have, nor do the British, the answer of how to achieve the desired horizontal coordination and unity without the predictable (they should not really be unanticipated) side effects. Perhaps the adaptations needed to make corporate management "work" as the British carry on will shed light on that issue.

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[2]Patricia Rowan, "Beleaguered by Bains and Bureaucrats," The Times Educational Supplement, March 18, 1977.

[3]_____, "When Did You Last See Your Education Officer?" The Times Educational Supplement, March 25, 1977.

[4]Bains Report

[5]Gordon Moore, Chief Executive Officer of Bradford: "I always said it was a mistake to print diagrams. It was meant to produce guidelines, not a blueprint." In Patricia Rowan, "A Case for Change," The Times Educational Supplement, March 18, 1977. Mr. Moore is credited with the (in)famous, oft-repeated comment that teachers were basically just the same as dustmen (garbage men in the U.S.), since both were performing a service to the community.

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[33]Richard W. Saxe, "Mayors and Schools," Urban Education IV No. 3 (October, 1969), p. 247.

[34]See, for example, Tim Parsons, "The Community School Movement," Community Issues, 2 December, 1970, entire issue.

[35]Mario D. Fantini, "Toward a Redefinition of American Education," Educational Leadership (December, 1977), p. 170. Our own statement supporting this movement is found in Richard Saxe (Ed.) Opening the Schools. (Berkeley, California: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1972) pp. 399-400.

[36]In Stockport the youth service was lost to recreation and culture. In Avon youth service reports to community and leisure and now the careers advisory officer has also been taken out of education to community and leisure. See Rowan, "Disenchantment and Disruption," Times Educational Supplement, March 18, 1977.

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